

REPORT
OF
THE SECRETARY OF WAR,

IN ANSWER TO

A resolution of the Senate, calling for surveys of the Potomac river in the vicinity of Washington.

JANUARY 28, 1858.—Referred to the Committee on Commerce. Motion to print referred to the Committee on Printing.

MARCH 30, 1858.—Report in favor of printing submitted, considered and agreed to.

WAR DEPARTMENT,
Washington, January 25, 1858.

SIR: In compliance with a resolution of the Senate of the 14th instant, calling upon this department to transmit to the Senate any surveys or examination of the Potomac river in the vicinity of Washington city, made by any officer of the Topographical Bureau during the last year, I have the honor to enclose herewith the report of Captain J. C. Woodruff, accompanied by a chart thereof, and the correspondence connected with the subject.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

JOHN B. FLOYD,
Secretary of War.

Hon. J. C. BRECKINRIDGE,
President of the Senate.

WASHINGTON, D. C., January 9, 1858.

SIR: I have the honor to submit the map of the survey of the Georgetown channel of the Potomac river, made in obedience to the following order of the honorable Secretary of War:

“WAR DEPARTMENT, August 1, 1857.

“The request of the mayor of Georgetown, D. C., for the services of an officer of engineers to superintend the survey of the channel of the Potomac river is granted, and Captain J. C. Woodruff, Topographical Engineers, is assigned to the duty, and will confer with the mayor on the subject.

“JOHN B. FLOYD,
“Secretary of War.”

On conferring with the mayor of Georgetown, it was ascertained that the object of the survey was the examination of the Georgetown channel of the Potomac river, with the view to its improvement by deepening the channel over the bar near the foot of Mason's Island.

A very minute examination of the river bed has been made, by numerous soundings, extending from the aqueduct to the Long Bridge, and embracing all the shoals within these limits.

The result of the survey shows that *eight* feet of water can be carried over the bar at mean low water. Above the bar the channel is wide, with a depth varying from three to five fathoms; the channel below the bar is more contracted; but has a depth of not less than two and a half fathoms.

The navigation of the river, as shown by the accompanying letters, requires a depth of fourteen feet at low water; a channel of this depth with a width of two hundred feet, (the width of the channel at the narrowest point below the bar,) would require the removal of over one hundred and fifty thousand cubic yards of deposit, (mud and sand.)

The question presented for consideration is not a plan for the permanent improvement of the channel, the execution of which would require a large expenditure of money, and the benefits of which could not be experienced until its completion, but a measure for the immediate relief to navigation, in which the government is largely interested, in the prosecution of the treasury extension and the Washington aqueduct, the material of which is conveyed through the Georgetown channel.

The estimate for the improvement of the channel is as follows:

For excavating and removing 150,000 cubic yards of sand and mud, at 37 cents per cubic yard.....	\$55,500 00
For contingencies, including superintendence, &c., 10 per cent.....	5,550 00
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	61,050 00
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Appended hereto are copies of a letter from the mayor of Georgetown and an exhibit of the commerce of Georgetown; and copies of a letter from Mr. A. Ray, and of those referred to therein, marked No. 1, No. 2, No. 3, and No. 4.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

J. C. WOODRUFF,

Capt. Top. Eng., Ass't in Bureau.

Colonel J. J. ABERT,

Chief Top. Eng., Bureau Top. Eng'rs.

MAYOR'S OFFICE,

Georgetown, D. C., November 11, 1857.

DEAR SIR: I herewith enclose you some statistics of the commerce of Georgetown, obtained from the custom-house at this port.

In addition, I learn that the draught of vessels engaged in the trade

with Georgetown is from 12½ to 13 feet, and that if the navigation of the river Potomac was properly improved vessels of a greater draught would trade here.

Any other information that you may wish I will endeavor to furnish, and I would be glad to know whether this communication has been received in time for your report.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

R. R. CRAWFORD,
Mayor.

Captain WOODRUFF,
Top. Bureau, Washington City.

CUSTOM-HOUSE,
Georgetown, D. C., October 21, 1857.

The number of vessels entered, employed in the coasting trade, for the first three quarters ending 30th September, 1857, is 168, the amount of tonnage is 38,282 tons. This is exclusive of wood and oyster boats.

The number of vessels cleared during the same period was 49 ; tonnage 17,684 tons.

The number of arrivals from foreign countries, during the same period, was 5 ; tonnage 995 tons.

Clearances, 4 vessels ; 840 tons.

Value of merchandise imported from foreign countries, during the same period, is \$78,510 16—paying duty.

Value of merchandise exported to foreign countries, during the same period, is \$20,119 95.

Number of marine papers issued to enrolled and licensed vessels in this District, during the same period, 180.

Amount of tonnage of licensed and enrolled vessels, 26,367 tons.

Amount of tonnage of registered vessels, 420 tons.

If the canal had been in order it would have required double the amount of tonnage for the coasting trade on the article of coal alone.

There is one coal yard prepared to ship, during the year, 400,000 tons of coal.

WASHINGTON, December 24, 1857.

SIR: Please find enclosed paper marked—

No. 1. A copy of a letter from the Secretary of the Treasury, dated February 28, 1857, and addressed to Hon. R. M. T. Hunter, chairman, &c., &c., &c., recommending an appropriation by Congress of \$12,000, "in addition to the \$5,000 already appropriated," for the purpose of deepening the channel over the bar in the Potomac river above the Long Bridge.

No. 2 is a copy of a paper signed by Major A. H. Bowman, superintendent treasury extension.

No. 3 is a copy of the same officer's letter, dated November 30, 1857.

No. 4 is a copy of a letter from Captain M. C. Meigs, in charge of Capitol extension, upon the same subject.

The originals I have in my charge, and to be laid before the committee of Congress to whom the report to be made by you may be referred.

I hope the letters will afford you (with the information furnished by the mayor of Georgetown) sufficient ground for your calculation and estimate of the amount of money it may require to deepen the channel over the bar to fourteen feet low water, as desired and advised by Major Bowman and by the mayor of Georgetown.

One further remark I beg to make. Secretary Guthrie refers, in his letter of the 28th February, 1857, to an appropriation of \$5,000 having been made by Congress. At the time his letter was written the bill had passed the Senate, and reported favorably to the House from the committee, but it was not reached for action, and therefore the bill did not become a law.

In the hope your time will allow you to furnish an early report and estimate, I remain, with great respect, your most obedient servant,

ALEX. RAY.

Captain J. C. WOODRUFF,
Topographical Engineers.

No. 1.

TREASURY DEPARTMENT,
February 28, 1857.

SIR: I have the honor to apprise you that an appropriation is very desirable for the purpose of deepening the channel over the bar in the Potomac river above the Long Bridge, thereby largely increasing the facilities for approaching Georgetown.

As the work upon the treasury extension would be much conve-nienced by this matter, and the landing of the large quantities of granite for its use very much facilitated, I respectfully recommend that an appropriation of \$12,000 be made for the purpose, in addition to the \$5,000 already appropriated.

I have the honor to be, very respectfully, your obedient servant,
JAMES GUTHRIE,
Secretary of the Treasury.

Hon. R. M. T. HUNTER,
Chairman Committee on Finance, Senate.

No. 2.

"As a measure of economy in the delivery of the materials for the construction of the treasury extension alone, the amount called for, for deepening the channel above the Long Bridge, would be well expended.

"A. H. BOWMAN,
"Superintendent Treasury Extension."

No. 3.

OFFICE UNITED STATES TREASURY EXTENSION,

Washington, November 30, 1857.

The amount of tonnage that will probably pass through the Georgetown channel for the erection of the Treasury extension will be as follows :

Stone.....	22,600 tons.
Iron.....	500 "
Cement.....	1,800 "
Total.....	<u>24,900 tons.</u>

The amount of demurrage paid by the government in consequence of delay occasioned by the insufficiency of water on the bar of the Georgetown channel is not known at this office, but great delays and inconveniences have arisen from the detention of vessels loaded with granite, by grounding on the bars, with serious loss to the contractors, in detention and lighterage on granite intended for this building.

For all the vessels that are engaged in delivering granite for this building to pass freely over the bar there should be a depth of fourteen feet at low water.

The improvement of the Georgetown channel would greatly facilitate the delivery of materials to be used in the construction of several of the public buildings in this city.

Very respectfully, your obedient servant,

A. H. BOWMAN,

*Superintendent Treasury Extension.*THOS. P. MORGAN, *Washington, D. C.*

No. 4.

NOVEMBER 16, 1857.

DEAR SIR : I am not able to estimate with accuracy the quantities of materials for the works under my charge which will probably pass through the Georgetown channel. The heavier materials, stone and cement for the public buildings, are landed generally at the Washington wharves.

For the aqueduct there are probably twenty thousand or thirty thousand casks of cement to pass through the Georgetown channel. There are 1,828 tons of cast iron pipes, the greater part of which will pass through the same channel.

In addition to this there are considerable quantities of wheelbarrows and various light articles.

Much of the merchandise which ought to be landed in Washington, for the public buildings, is carried to Georgetown, in consequence of the packets being owned and discharged there, but large shipments I always endeavor to have consigned to Washington wharves.

My attention has not been turned to the question relating to the navigation of the Potomac, and I do not know what depth of water can be had up to the Long Bridge; I am, therefore, unable to say what depth is needed above the bridge.

Respectfully,

M. C. MEIGS,

Captain of Engineers in charge of Capitol extension.

THOMAS P. MORGAN, *Washington, D. C.*



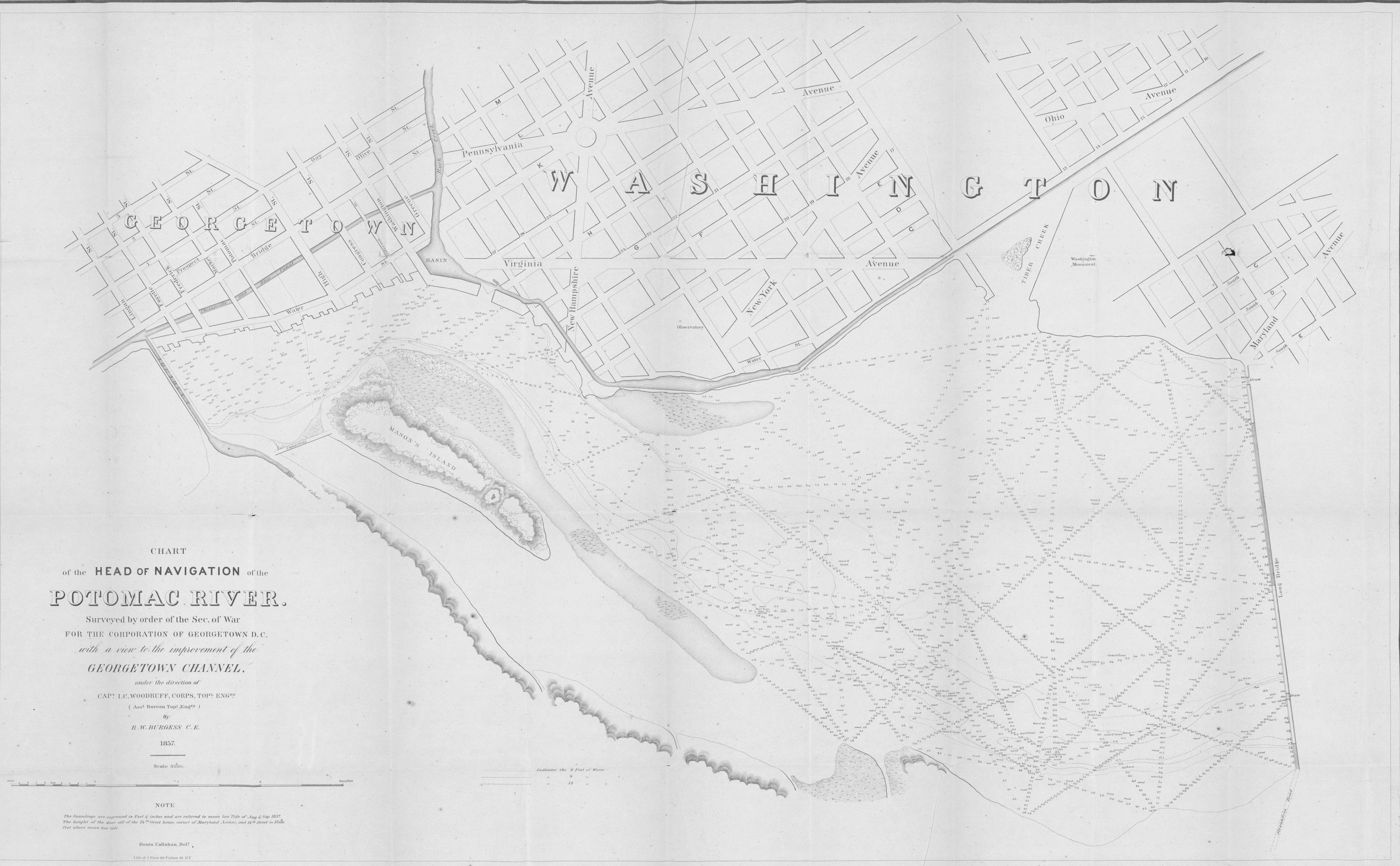


CHART
of the HEAD OF NAVIGATION of the
POTOMAC RIVER.

Surveyed by order of the Sec. of War
FOR THE CORPORATION OF GEORGETOWN D.C.
with a view to the improvement of the
GEORGETOWN CHANNEL,

under the direction of
CAPT. I. C. WOODRUFF, CORPS, TOP^Y ENG^{RS}
(Asst. Bureau Top^Y Eng^{RS})
By
R. W. BURGESS C. E.

1857.

Scale 5000.

NOTE

The Soundings are expressed in Feet & inches and are referred to mean low Tide of Aug. 4. Sep. 1857.
The height of the door sill of the 15th Street house, corner of Maryland Avenue, and 15th Street is 15.00
feet above mean low tide.

Denis Callahan, Del^r.

Lith. of J. Brien 60 Fulton St. N.Y.